# Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

**An independent and empowered social audit mechanism is an absolute must in every sphere of public service, including the judiciary, to ensure performance, accountability and ethical conduct. Elaborate.**

| EXAM YEAR | PAPER | SUBJECT |
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| 2021 | GS - IV | Ethics & Morality |

| MARKS | WORD LIMIT |
|---|---|
| 10 | ~150 words |

## Answer Hint

**Social audit, citizen participation, transparency, accountability, public expenditure, service delivery, right to information, MGNREGA, judicial accountability, institutional independence, privacy, procedural fairness, grievance redressal**

## Model Answer

### Introduction

A social audit is a participatory process through which citizens examine public expenditure, decisions and outcomes to verify whether institutions fulfil their obligations. It strengthens democratic accountability by involving the people affected by public services.

### Importance of Social Audits

- **Transparency:** Public records and expenditure details become accessible for scrutiny.
- **Accountability:** Officials can be questioned about delays, irregularities and misuse of public funds.
- **Better service delivery:** Community verification identifies excluded beneficiaries, incomplete works and poor-quality services.
- **Citizen empowerment:** Participation gives vulnerable groups a voice in governance.

- **Deterrence of corruption:** Public hearings and independent verification increase the likelihood of detecting wrongdoing.

**Application Across Sectors**

- **Welfare programmes:** Under MGNREGA, social audits can verify muster rolls, wage payments and completed works.
- **Local governance:** Citizens can scrutinise public expenditure, sanitation and infrastructure projects.
- **Healthcare and education:** Community monitoring can reveal shortages, absenteeism and deficiencies in service delivery.
- **Judiciary:** Transparent reporting of case pendency, administrative expenditure and institutional performance can improve accountability. However, judicial audits must preserve decisional independence, confidentiality and due process.

**Conditions for Effectiveness**

Social audit institutions require statutory backing, financial and operational independence, trained personnel, access to records, protection for participants and time-bound action on findings.

**Conclusion**

An independent social audit mechanism can strengthen ethical conduct and institutional performance. Its effectiveness depends on genuine citizen participation, credible follow-up and safeguards against intimidation or political interference.

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